

Diseases in 1988, but says his bosses transferred the research grants he administered to other workers eight years later, leaving him with occasional tasks more suitable for a typist or "gofer."

**Letter for Stimulus Rebate Checks.** The recently passed stimulus package will provide rebate checks to 130 million households. Before those checks are issued, though, the Internal Revenue Service will send a letter out to each household that will get a rebate check to inform them that the check is on the way. Unfortunately, the cost of sending these pre-rebate letters will be \$42 million once the costs are tallied for postage and printing. The letter will not contain the actual rebate, but will merely explain that the stimulus package was passed and what a citizen should do with the check once they receive it. It is not clear why this information could not be provided with the actual check at its time of arrival, leading some to think that the letter serves no higher purpose than to give Congress and the President a pat on the back. Surely, there could be a better use for the \$42 million—like giving it back to taxpayers.

**Senate Restaurants.** The Senate Restaurants, which is overseen by the Architect of the Capitol, operates the Senate cafeterias, catering services, snack shops, vending machine and the Senate Members Dining Room. A recently GAO audit found that the American taxpayers have covered the Senate restaurants' \$2.36 million operating losses during the last two combined fiscal years. The operating loss rose from \$1.02 million in 2006 to \$1.34 million in 2007. After taking in just over \$10 million of revenues in 2007, being \$1.34 million in the red translates into a 13.4% operating loss for the Senate Restaurants. No business could operate in the private sector with these kinds of losses but this is the kind of waste that we are seeing all throughout the federal government. Prompted, the recent GAO audit, the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration is now seeking an outside vendor to take over operations of the Senate Restaurants.

**Unneeded Federal Buildings.** The federal government currently owns 21,000 buildings that it says it no longer needs, which are all together worth \$18 billion. At the Department of Energy alone, the unneeded property is equivalent to three times the amount of square footage in the Pentagon—the largest building in the world. Unfortunately, the rules and regulations in place make it nearly impossible for federal agencies to sell these buildings in a timely manner on the open market. According to the rules, before an agency sells a property it is required to conduct extensive reviews to determine if the property could be used to meet some public benefit, such as a homeless shelter, school, airport runway or path for telephone wires. If a determination is made that the property could be used in this way, after a process that can take years, it is then available to be given away at no cost to an applicant. In the years that these rules have been in place, 30,000 properties have been required to undergo these reviews, but only a fraction of a percent of have ever been given away. Unfortunately, because all properties are required to undergo this process there is a tremendous bottle-necking effect, preventing agencies from selling unneeded properties. This hurts agencies in two ways: first, it means that agencies are deprived of the money that they could earn by selling the property, and second, it means that agencies are required to pay for upkeep of buildings they don't need. Instead of allowing these properties to be sold on behalf of taxpayers, Congress has chosen to keep the rules in place and wasted the opportunity to make \$18 billion.

**2010 Decennial Census.** The 2010 Decennial Census will use a six-question survey to

count every person in the country, as required by the Constitution for apportioning the House of Representatives. The Census Bureau has recently estimated that the overall cost of the census would be \$11.8 billion, which is nearly double what was spent to conduct operations in 2000. More recently, though, we have found out that the Bureau has so grossly mismanaged a \$600 million contract for handheld computers that cost overruns as high as \$2 billion are possible. Most of this cost would be the result of needing to abandon the handheld computers in favor of conducting the census entirely by paper. Due to the recent revelations, the Government Accountability Office has placed the 2010 Census on its High Risk List, which is reserved only for the most problematic programs in the federal government.

**Mr. COBURN.** Mr. President, I yield the floor.

**The PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from Vermont is recognized.

**Mr. SANDERS.** Mr. President, let me begin by commending my friend from Oklahoma, who I think makes some very important points. There is no question that there is an enormous amount of waste and fraud and abuse in this Government. There is no question, in my mind, that Congress has not been vigilant enough in rooting out that waste and fraud to the tune of billions and billions of dollars.

I would simply say that while it is absolutely appropriate to condemn the Congress, it is also important to note that we have an administration in this city, in Washington, DC, and the function of an administration is to administer. That means that when there is waste and fraud, you have an administration that should also be on top of that situation. And I think of the many failings of the Bush administration, which, in my view, will go down in history as one of the worst in our country's history—clearly their overall incompetence will be one of those areas people will focus on.

The second point I would make—and I see my friend from Oklahoma has left—is that he is absolutely right that a \$9.2 trillion national debt is unsustainable. But one of the areas I don't believe he mentioned in terms of driving up that national debt is the war in Iraq.

Now, we can have a great debate about the wisdom of that war. I voted against it when I was in the House. I think we should bring our troops home as soon as possible. But right now, we are not on the war, we are on the budget. And the question regarding the budget is, For all those people who support the war, why don't you pay for the war now rather than forcing our kids and grandchildren to pay to the tune of \$150 billion a year? And some say the cost of this war eventually will run into the trillions of dollars. So all of those people who talk about fiscal irresponsibility refuse not to pay for the war.

I was reading a book about Dwight David Eisenhower, and in the book it points out that during the Korean war, Truman imposed a surtax on people's personal income tax and an excess-

profits tax in order to pay for the war. I don't see the advocates of the war in Iraq coming forward and saying: We don't want to leave that burden of \$150 billion a year to our kids and grandchildren, so we are going to come up and pay for it now. I didn't hear my friend from Oklahoma raise that issue.

I hear other people coming to the floor and they say: Well, we have this tremendous national debt, and they have pictures of the kids, and yet they propose to completely eliminate the estate tax, which over the course of 20 years will cause us a loss of \$1 trillion. How is that going to be paid for? Oh, I guess we don't have to pay for it. I guess we can just pass that on to the kids. So I think that some of our friends who talk about fiscal responsibility might, in fact, want to pay for this war today, not pass it on to future generations. And when they are talking about giving huge tax breaks to the wealthiest people in this country, let them understand that is all they are doing, is driving up the national debt so that our kids and grandchildren will be forced to pay for that.

We are in the midst of a debate about the budget, and as you know a budget is a lot more than just numbers; it reflects the values and the priorities of our Nation. And when we look at what is going on in this country, as important as a \$9.2 trillion national debt is, it is not the only issue of importance. What is also important is to understand today what is going on in terms of the needs and the lives of middle-class and working people.

One of the realities we do not talk about very much today is that poverty in America is increasing. In fact, since President Bush has been in office, almost 5 million more Americans have joined the ranks of the poor. That is part of the Bush economy. We now have almost 36.5 million Americans who are living in poverty. Many of these people are working, and they are working 40 or 50 hours a week, but they are making 8 bucks an hour, they are making 7 bucks an hour, and they are just not making enough money in order to lift themselves out of poverty. In fact, the United States of America today has the highest rate of poverty of any major nation on Earth, and that is an issue which we should address here in the Senate.

When we are talking about Americans living in poverty, we are not, of course, just talking about adults. Tragically, we are also talking about children. I know our President and many others talk about family values. Well, this is not a family value. Under President Bush's administration, since he has been in office, 1.2 million more children are now living in poverty, and we have almost 13 million kids in this country who live in poverty. That is not a family value. That is a national disgrace. As a matter of fact, the United States has the dubious distinction of having the highest childhood poverty rate in the industrialized world.